BROADCAST

TELEVISION REVIEW

CBS Reports: Inside the Union

CBS, March 6, 8-9 p.m.

The volatile relationship between those who manage the unions and those who have to work in them on a daily basis is a continuing source of stress in business, and it was this aspect that "Inside the Union" covered so well. Taking for its cue the opinions coupled with the frustrations of United Steelworkers Local 1010 in East Chicago, Ill., the special examined the whys and wherefores behind the group's animosity towards those in leadership positions. It's a story that's not necessarily anything new but, then again, topicality isn't exactly the point, as this program made plain – receptive accountability is.

Interspersed with quotations written by Carl Sandburg on the same subject at the turn of the century, the documentary tried its level best to represent each side of the conflict, from the vocal assessments of various steelworkers demanding improved working conditions and benefits to the less enraged but still secure echelon who make the pivotal decisions. Who's right and who's wrong is a convenient black and white issue totally at odds in this situation; how can the communication chasm be bridged and closed is the real question seeking an answer.

Producer Irv Drasnin directed from his own balanced script. George Herman was on-camera correspondent. Ken Wiederhorn's editing worked in smooth cohesion with Greg Cooke's photography. Meg Clarke was associate producer for this probing CBS presentation.

– Earl Davis

Terrence O'Flaherty

TV Today

View From the Inside

NEWSPAPERS AND television are filled with the opinions and statements of labor union leaders. But what about the 20 million Americans who are paying union dues? What are THEY saying?

To find an answer, writer-producer Irv Drasnin of CBS News didn't go to the AFL-CIO or conduct surveys or repeat statistics. He and CBS correspondent George Herman went, instead, to the biggest local in one of the most powerful unions in America — Local 1010 of the United Steelworkers representing the work force of Inland Steel in East Chicago, Ind. The results can be seen on tomorrow night's CBS Report entitled "Inside the Union" at 8 o'clock on Channel 5. It is a well-made documentary that throws in labor history, several interesting observations by steelworkers and a candid look at the voting inequities which infuriate the rank-and-file workers.

Carl Sandburg

★ ★ ★

NO ONE DENIES that the workers are better off today than they were back in 1920 when Carl Sandburg wrote his poem "Smoke and Steel," but now, it seems, the rights they fought their employers for are now being lost to an international union establishment whose direction they must follow whether they like it or not.

"I'm sitting in a tavern in South Chicago and it comes on the TV that the contract has been settled," says one steelworker. "Well this is MY contract. I mean, why do I got to learn that from the television, that it's been settled.

that from the television, that it's been settled, OK? And you know, why can't I say, 'Hey, what are the terms of this contract' and I'll say whether it's been settled or not. Or, at least, I'll have my one-400,000th of a say as to whether it's been settled, you know?"

"What we fear mostly is at the top," says another worker. "We feel like they got out of touch. Maybe they need to come back and work in the mill every once in a while. Most people at the top (of the international union) ain't been in the mill in 15, 20 years."

★ ★ ★

CORRESPONDENT HERMAN zeroes in on the big problem at Local 1010: "Most large unions which negotiate nationwide contracts go back to their memberships for approval. But that's not true for workers in basic steel. That's what the right to ratify is all about," says Herman.

"They feel they've achieved democracy in their own local but they're not confident that the same rules will apply at the international convention in Atlantic City."

And, after what CBS shows us of that gathering headed by USW president Lloyd McBride, it would seem clear that the workers in South Chicago are absolutely right. Local spokesmen are shouted down, bullied off the microphone.

"You don't shut me out," says one worker-spokesman. "I've been waiting to get to this mike for four years!"

But shut him out, they do. Eventually speakers are heard on both sides — but the vote is never in doubt, observes Herman. "There's no doubt either on 1010's demand for a roll-call vote. There has never been one at a steelworkers' convention."

"That's why I say THIS isn't the union. The union's back in the mill!" comments one worker.

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ANOTHER STEELWORKER sums it up better than CBS can, apparently, because producer-writer Drasnin allows his comment to close tomorrow night's report:

"Well, George Meany and them are in trouble because I don't see most of them are doing a very effective job of going to their membership and saying 'Look, this is what we have to do but we can't do it because we're just individuals. We can only do it if we speak for you and if we have your backing.'

"I don't see them doing that. And even if they did that, I don't know what kind of response they'd get because for years they've been saying they don't want our backing, don't need our backing. They don't want us to say nothing.

" 'We'll run the union,' they say, 'and you just pay the dues.'

"Now I think the chickens are starting to come home to roost. They're losing and they don't really know what to do."

CBS uses Local 1010 to demonstrate union plight

By ERNIE HERNANDEZ
Post-Tribune Staff Reporter

EAST CHICAGO — The plight of local unions — pitted against management for better wages and working conditions, and against their own international leaders for democratic representation — is on national focus Tuesday night.

The hour-long show is "CBS Reports: Inside the Union" on Channel 2 at 7 p.m. It surely will arouse controversy.

Attention is directed at one local of the United Steelworkers of America — Local 1010, which is the largest in the 1.4 million-member union with 18,000 members, and which isn't in step with the union's president, Lloyd McBride.

But Irv Drasnin, the producer, said CBS Reports focused on the unit at the Indiana Harbor plant of Inland Steel Co. because represents a cross section of workers, and a its members are in the same plant. It's co sidered representative of unions and USW general.

A year in the making, the documentary filming was started last April, and it includ scenes at union halls, bars, parking lots, picn grounds, and at the USW convention at Atla tic City.

There also are background shots of ste making processes — the open hearth, the ro ing mills, the blast furnaces — although C wasn't allowed inside Inland Steel's plant, a as narrator George Herman reports:

"Inland Steel refused us permisson to fi inside the mill ... and declined to talk to about it. We got as close as a telephoto co take us."There are aerial shots of the pla

"We went to Inland because it's big and it's ıccessful; and East Chicago, Indiana, is at e heart of America's steel industry," the ırrator says.

The union is portrayed through the words of s officials — Bill Andrews, the president; liff Mezo, vice president; Jim Robinson, riever, and son-in-law of James Balanoff, ɔrmer president; Balanoff himself, now Dis- ict 31 director; John Sargent, 39-year veteran nd former four-term president; Bill Young, etired member, and Mike Olszanski, environ- ıent committee chairman.

The documentary, therefore, is essentially ıe story of the incumbent Rank and File dministration at Local 1010, which took over ı 1976 with the election of Balanoff as presi- ent, and Edward Sadlowski as District 31 irector. Opponents of that caucus may have something to say about that, since there's an election of local officers at 1010 next month.

The film takes the Rank and File group's battles to the convention at Atlantic City and a problem peculiar to the steelworkers' union — delegate seating.

"The struggle is no longer just with the company, but within the union itself, over issues that go to the very spirit of the labor movement — the right to strike, the right to ratify contracts, democracy in the union," Herman narrates.

But USW conventions are traditionally rigged, and CBS through Local 1010's Rank and File, tells the nation about it.

The union's staffers, some 700 of them, all show up as delegates at conventions, making up an administration-paid majority, and Mezo describes an example — when Balanoff was booed for trying to speak against a new banning outside funds for union elections.

"This is orchestrated ... When they boos, they get boos. When they want che they get cheers," says Mezo on national te sion.

And so, reliving the convention at Atl City, TV shows the Rank and File, Sadlow and Balanoff's party, defeated again.

By focusing on Local 1010 and Rank File, CBS Reports may or may not be target in its search for the typical u Other unions, and other locals in USW, n argue that they are more representative, r in touch with the rank and file.

But at Local 1010, in conflict with its i national as well as its employer, CBS f issues more clearly defined, and openly pounded.